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China Policy Leads to Split Among Scholars

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Staff writer

A radical group of young Asian scholars is planning a symbolic "breakaway" from the prestigious Association for Asian Studies during its annual conference scheduled in Boston next week-end.

Dramatizing their opposition to U.S. policy towards mainland China, four members of the group including three Harvard graduate students met with Communist Chinese diplomats in Paris just a month ago.

They presented a statement to the Chinese Embassy there declaring that the problem with Sino-American relations is "not the 'containment' of China, but what to do about the expansion of the United States."

The group organized a year ago as the Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars after holding a "vietnam Caucus" during the association's annual conference in Philadelphia.

C.C.A.S. counts about 100 Asian scholars around the country as members, with its largest and most active chapter at Harvard.

It will hold its own conference in Boston this Friday, Saturday and Sunday in competition with the formal three-day meeting of the Association for Asian Studies planned at the Sheraton Boston.

The A.A.S. is the foremost professional organization of Asian experts in the country and includes such figures as Edwin O. Reischauer and John King Fairbank of Harvard and A. Doak Barnett and C. Martin Wilbur of Columbia.

But the new radical committee feels that the A.A.S. and its established scholars simply reinforce unjust U.S. policies towards China.

"Since 1945, there has been a circular flow of academics, military specialists, CIA agents, State Department officials, and others, linking the academic world to the U.S. government," the C.C.A.S. charges.

"Harvard's East Asian Research Center, for example, invites CIA personnel to 'study' China on campus, and most East Asian departments are eager to channel their graduates into government service."

To emphasize their point of view, four members of the committee went to Paris last month and initiated a meeting with Communist Chinese officials there Feb. 20, the day official United States-China diplomatic talks were to re-open in Warsaw, Poland.

Harvard graduate students Thomas Engelhardt, John Livingston and Cheryl P. Goodman and Neale Hunter, an Australian recently arrived in America from teaching English in Peking, had two meetings at the Chinese Embassy, Feb. 20 and 22.

They said their trip demonstrated that "contacts are possible between ordinary American citizens and the People's Republic of China, despite the present position of the U.S. government."

In their written statement to the Communist diplomats, they made two proposals for improving U.S.-China relations: (1) an end to United States containment of China by the withdrawal of American military forces from bases in South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines, and (2) United States recognition of Taiwan as an integral part of mainland China.

The students reported that the Chinese officials in Paris responded to the C.C.A.S. statement as "objective and accurately reflecting both the hostility of U.S. policy toward China and what must be done to improve relations."

C.C.A.S. organizers are planning to use the occasion of the Association for Asian Studies annual meeting to draw attention to their more radical outlook on American policies in the Far East.

The A.A.S. has scheduled a series of speeches and panel discussions at the Sheraton Boston for three full days beginning this Friday.

As a splinter group of sorts, the C.C.A.S. will hold simultaneous meetings in the neighboring Lenox in an effort to attract some of the more than 2000 Asian scholars expected to attend the A.A.S. meeting.

One panel has been set up jointly by the two groups, a Saturday afternoon discussion about some of the origins of U.S. government hostility toward Communist China featuring Richard Kagan of the University of Pennsylvania, O. Edmund Clubb of Columbia, Ross Koen of the California State Teachers Assn., Howard Zinn of B.U. and Owen Lattimore of Leeds University in England.

Org. 1 Committee for
Concerned Asian
Scholars

Org 1. Association for Asian
Studies

C.C.A.-4.01 Colleges and Universities
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